

Approved For Release 2003/05/29 : CIA-RDP79T00975A015700010001-6

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DIRECTORATE OF
INTELLIGENCE

Central Intelligence Bulletin

Secret

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27 February 1970

STATE review(s) completed.

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No. 0050/70
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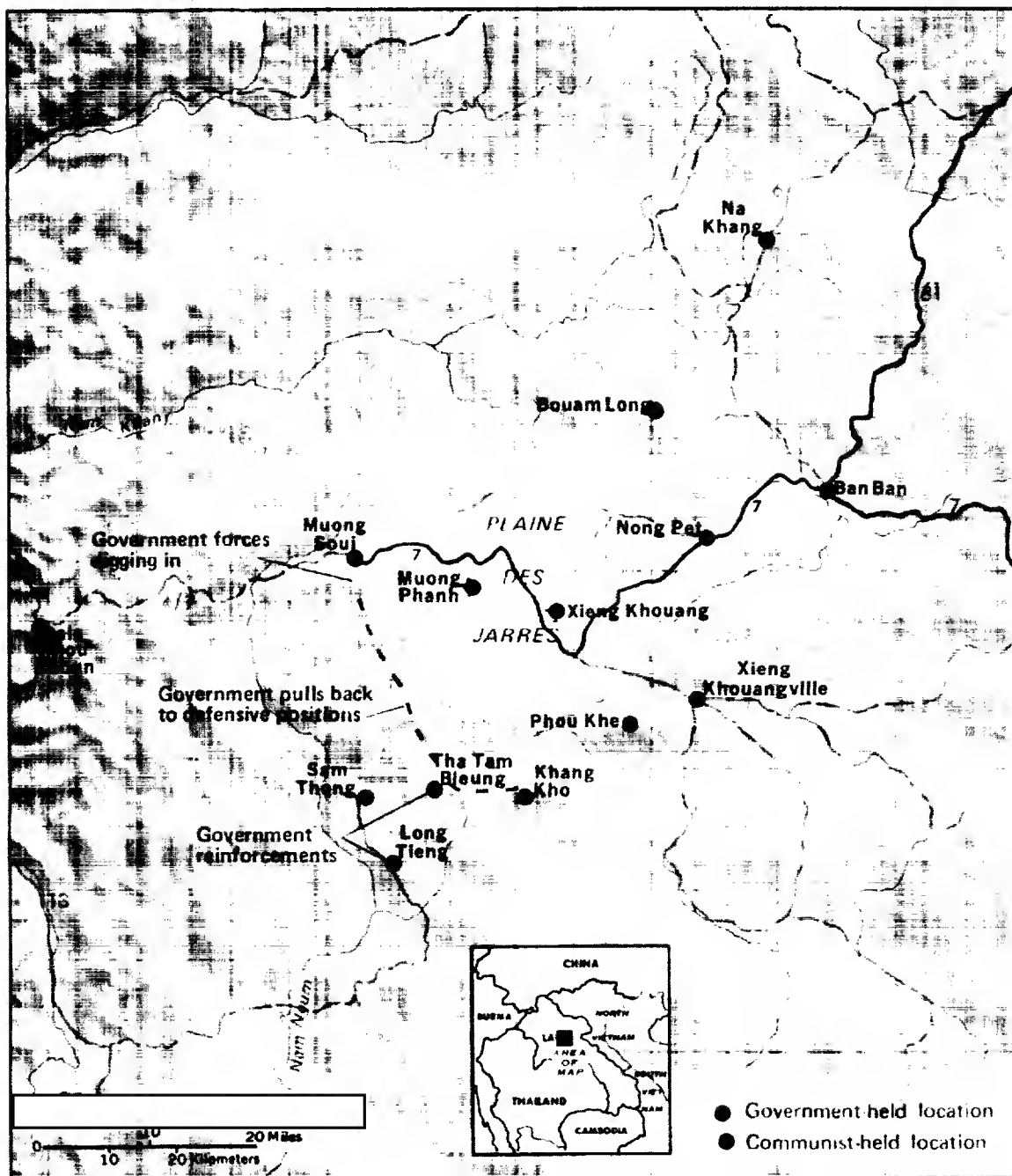


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Government Preparing for New Communist Activity



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Laos: General Vang Pao continues to prepare for a North Vietnamese push off the Plaine des Jarres.

Anticipating a Communist thrust toward his headquarters at Long Tieng, Vang Pao has strengthened government defenses south and west of the Plaine. Government troops who evacuated Muong Soui on 24 February are taking up new positions some three miles south of the airstrip. Southwest of the Plaine, 200 guerrillas are moving to the Tha Tam Bleung outpost while another 150 troops are being brought back to Long Tieng to strengthen the local defense force.

With these deployments, the 500 troops at Bouam Long represent the only significant government force remaining north of the Plaine. The battle lines in the Plaine des Jarres area are now back to where they were before the government launched its rainy season campaign last August.

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South Vietnam: An increase in enemy shellings in the Mekong Delta on 25-26 February may signal a new phase of the Communists' "winter-spring" campaign.

Communist forces in many sectors of the country have been actively preparing for offensive operations. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] The Communists have planned a number of "high points" in recent months that have been only partially carried out, however.

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Documents captured in III Corps disclose that the enemy's "spring" campaign there is scheduled to begin today. Variations in timing from one region to another are probably designed to allow field commanders leeway to adjust their timetables to their own state of preparedness and to local conditions. The Communists will probably rely on shellings, limited ground actions, and terrorism in urban centers to display a semblance of strength. Some of the Communist main force units that have been lying low for some months may also participate, but most of these units remain in sanctuary areas. [REDACTED]

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Egypt: The rapid increase in the debilitating parasitic disease schistosomiasis is jeopardizing the economic gains from the Aswan High Dam and is affecting a large part of Egypt's military manpower pool.

Schistosomiasis is caused by a parasitic blood fluke carried by a snail found in the quiet water impounded by dams or in irrigation canals. The disease causes tissue damage, anemia, internal bleeding, and a general lethargy. It is seldom fatal, however.

The construction of the dam and its associated irrigation systems has contributed to the spread of the disease. In addition, a large number of previously infected persons have moved into the area near the dam. As a result, the incidence of the disease near the dam has risen from about 23 percent to over 90 percent in the last three years. Over 22 million of the total Egyptian population of about 35 million are believed to be already infected.

The disease poses a severe problem for the military; it infects nearly all the male agricultural population--the bulk of Egypt's manpower pool. Drugs tried in the past have been ineffective, but the Egyptian Army is conducting field trials of a new drug that promises to be an advance in treating schistosomiasis. The use of the drug, however, will not prevent reinfection, which will require eliminating the snail.

Thus far the USSR has not become involved in the search for solutions to this problem. The Egyptians are looking primarily to the US because of previous medical assistance and because of successful demonstrations of the new drug in other countries.

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Venezuela-Guyana: Venezuela is becoming increasingly exasperated with Guyana's diplomatic moves against it.

On Wednesday Venezuelan Foreign Minister Calvani asked the US chargé for US good offices to convince Guyana that increasing tension over the recent border incidents would not be helpful. He blamed Guyana for raising the level of provocation until the Venezuelan troops were forced to fire in self defense. Calvani added that Guyana's protest note on the incidents and its letter to the UN Security Council made it appear that the Guyanese hoped that the coming negotiations between the two countries would fail. Guyana's Prime Minister Burnham apparently hoped by raising the issue at the UN to forestall additional actions by the Venezuelans, but he may have miscalculated the Venezuelan reaction.

The US Embassy in Caracas believes that Venezuelan civilian leaders are having difficulty pursuing their policy of seeking a peaceful solution to the problem. If the situation should deteriorate further, the military could bring increasing pressure on the government for a military solution.

No incidents have occurred at Ankoko Island since 23 February nor have additional Venezuelan reinforcements been sent to the island. The Venezuelans, however, have strengthened their military forces along the border.

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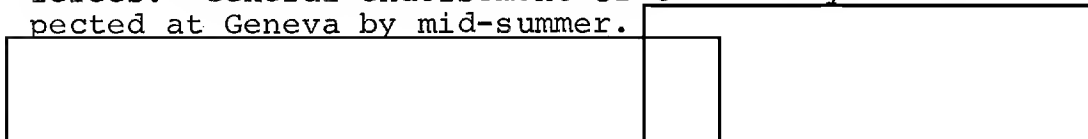
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Arms Control: Some new developments have taken place at the resumed Geneva disarmament talks.

In an address to the conference, UN Secretary General Thant suggested that the 25 participants consider the military implications of the gas centrifuge method of producing enriched uranium. The chief Polish delegate has reiterated this concern, citing the centrifuge project of the UK, West Germany, and the Netherlands. The East European states probably plan to take a tough line during the coming safeguards negotiations between the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and EURATOM to ensure that the IAEA has an inspection role in the centrifuge project.

There appears to be a fairly widespread desire at Geneva for visible activity on general and complete disarmament, a subject that has not been discussed in detail since 1964. The USSR believes that the time is ripe to discuss this issue, a familiar Soviet propaganda ploy, but has no specific proposals to present at this time. The Italians are likely to offer an initiative soon in the form of a disarmament program, possibly focusing on some aspect of the problem of conventional arms limitations.

On the US-USSR draft treaty limiting the use of the seabeds for military purposes, Moscow has given the US a generally favorable response to revisions suggested by Canada and Argentina. Representatives of the superpowers are now attempting to reach agreement on a text that could be presented to the conferees. General endorsement of the treaty is expected at Geneva by mid-summer.



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NOTES

Philippines: Effective police action prevented possible damage to the US Embassy in Manila yesterday during a demonstration there by about 150 students. At least 14 injuries resulted as police acted against demonstrators at the embassy and elsewhere in Manila. Student leaders hope to stage more anti-US protests during the next week and are playing on resentment aroused because a number of US servicemen under subpoena by Philippine courts have left the country.

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